

**Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**July 24, 2019**

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on July 24, 2019, at the American Legion, 1708 Commonwealth Ave., Richmond.

**Members Present**

- Rick Oertel, American Legion
- John Cooper, AMVETS
- Michael Flanagan, Association of the United States Army
- Denice Williams, Disabled American Veterans
- Tim Whitmore, Korean War Veterans Association
- Kenneth Shelton, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- William Ashton, Fleet Reserve Association
- Jim Barrett, Marine Corps League
- Frank Wickersham, Military Officers Association of America
- Jim Cuthbertson, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Preston Curry, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- David Sitler, Reserve Officers Association
- Perry Taylor, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- Dan Boyer, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Judy Reid, Women Marines Association
- Jim Icenhour, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services
- Commissioner John L. Newby II, Department of Veterans Services

**Members Present by Remote Location**

- Lauren Augustine, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America

**Members Absent**

- Tom Wozniak, Air Force Association
- Robert Herbert, Legion of Valor
- William Barrett, Military Order of the World Wars
- Craig Cressman, Navy Mutual Aid Association
- Mike Boyle, Navy Seabee Veterans of America
- Jon Ostrowski, Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Charles Montgomery, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Robert Barnette, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
- Kevin Reynolds, Virginia National Guard Association
- Frank Finelli, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation,

**Alternates Present (representing their VSO)**

- James Merchant, Air Force Association
- Hans Mumm, Military Order of the World Wars
- Carl Holcomb, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association

- Walter Mercer, Virginia National Guard Association
- Jack Hilgers, Veterans Services Foundation

#### **Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)**

- Bob Sempek, AUSA
- Rich Anderson, Military Officers Association of America

#### **Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present**

- Deputy Sec. Kathleen Jabs, Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Elizabeth Paz, Governor's Fellow, Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Carrie Ann Alford, DVS
- Annie Walker, DVS
- Brian Pickral, DVS
- Tramaine Carroll-Payne, DVS
- Martina Murray, DVS
- Hughes McLean, DVS
- Bryan Harrison, DVS
- Clay Mountcastle, DVS
- Frank Badillo, TAX
- Stuart Carter, TAX
- David Wingfield, VADOC
- Karen Harris, Office of Senator Tim Kaine
- Karla Boughey, Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)
- Jerri Wilson, City of Newport News

#### **Others Present**

- Richard Creal, Gov't Services Administration (GSA)
- Maggie Wickersham, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
- Monti Zimmerman, MOAA
- Brandon Hughes, IAVA
- Matt Underwood
- Regina T. Webb
- Craig McLeod

#### **Items included in the Agenda Packet**

##### Agenda

April 17, 2019 meeting minutes (Agenda Item V)

Reports (Agenda Item VI)

- Board of Veterans Services
- Veterans Services Foundation

New Business (Agenda Item X)

- Election of Chair and Vice Chair motion (Agenda Item X.a)
- Introduction of two letters to Governor Northam (Agenda Item X.b.i)

- Introduction of potential 2020 JLC initiatives (Agenda Item X.b.ii)
- Call for appointed officers (Agenda Item X.d)

### **Opening, Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation & Thoughts**

Chairman Frank Wickersham called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m., and led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chaplain Denice Williams delivered an opening thoughts meditation.

### **Roll Call of VSOs, Quorum Determination, Introduction of New Members, and Introduction of Guests**

The roll was called, and 19 of the 25 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) were recorded as being represented at the time of the roll call. Mr. Jim Icenhour, the Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS); Mr. Frank Finelli, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation (VSF); and DVS Commissioner John L. Newby II, were recorded as present. A quorum was determined. One member came in after roll was called, for a total of 20 of the 25 VSOs present.

Chairman Wickersham introduced the soon to be new members to the JLC who were present and asked them to stand as able and be recognized: Hans Mumm (MOWW) and Mike Boyle (Navy SeaBees) They were given a round of applause as a welcome to the JLC.

Chairman Wickersham asked the guests in attendance to introduce themselves. Their names and organizations are recorded above. Vice Chairman Wickersham welcomed them to the meeting.

### **Approval of the Agenda, Approve April 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Wickersham asked for approval of the agenda. Mr. Dan Boyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Dave Sitler to approve the meeting agenda. The motion carried **unanimously**. Chairman Wickersham asked for approval of the April 17, 2019 meeting minutes and agenda. Mr. James Cuthbertson made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. John Cooper to approve the minutes. The motions carried **unanimously**. (Agenda is *Attachment 1*)

### **REPORTS**

#### **Board of Veterans Services**

BVS Chairman Jim Icenhour gave the BVS report stating that BVS has not met since the last JLC meeting. The BVS had received three new appointments, Ms. Kathy Owens and Ms. Thurraya Kent, who he and Ms. Alford will be meeting with that afternoon for orientation and Senator John Cosgrove, a Navy veteran, who is filling Senator Wexton's seat (*Attachment 2*)

#### **Veterans Services Foundation**

In the absence of VSF Chairman Frank Finelli, board trustee Jack Hilgers gave the VSF report and stated that he is glad to be back amongst friends and gave a thorough report to the JLC on the many issues and areas of focus currently for the VSF (*Attachment 3*)

#### **DVS Update**

Deputy Commissioner Steve Combs mentioned that everyone had in their packet the new map of DVS offices in Virginia and turned it over to Commissioner Newby, who began by acknowledging Deputy

Secretary Kathleen Jabs in attendance. He then gave an overview of the changes that had recently occurred at DVS with regard to organizational structure. The restructure will allow DVS to provide more support to our service line Directors, thus helping us continue to provide superior service to Virginia's service members, veterans and their families. Steve Combs will be the deputy commissioner supporting our veterans care centers and our Virginia War Memorial, and will be the Agency's Chief Deputy. Annie Walker will be the Deputy Commissioner supporting our Education and Employment & Transition programs. And Thomas Herthel will be the Deputy Commissioner supporting our VVFS, Benefits and Cemeteries service lines. Policy, Finance, HR and Communications will be aligned under the Commissioner and Lee Tinsley has been elevated to CIO.

He mentioned that Ms. Alford is in her busy time of year working on budget and legislative priorities for 2020.

The construction project at the Virginia War Memorial has delayed the grand opening that was planned for Sept. 11 (Patriot's Day) but there will still be the annual Patriot's Day ceremony at 1800 hours. The Governor has been invited to attend.

There are soon to be 34 offices with an August 8<sup>th</sup> opening at the Oceana office, which has already had a soft opening and they are seeing veterans now. And on August 15, there will be a grand opening for the new office at Fort Belvoir, however, that is the grand opening for the whole building, which is owned by the Army and the office will not start seeing veterans that day, it is a ceremonial opening. Invitations will go out soon.

Commissioner Newby thanked the JLC for all their hard work and things accomplished while he has served as Commissioner. He is departing the agency next week, but staying in Richmond and will stay active in veterans issues.

Chairman Wickersham ended by presenting Commissioner Newby with a small token of appreciation for his service to Virginia.

### **Presentation on DVS Education Programs**

Chairman Wickersham introduced Deputy Commissioner Annie Walker, who explained the new structure that has evolved from the old "VETE." She introduced her education team and Ms. Tramaine Carroll-Payne, Assistant Director of Education Programs, presented on the State Approving Agency (SAA) and the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

The Veterans Education Transition and Employment (VETE) directorate of the Virginia Department of Veteran's Services ensures that every Veteran or eligible person has a full and fair opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential through access to the G.I. Bill approved post-secondary educational, training/licensure/certification, entrepreneurial institutions, V3 certified employers and Virginia Colleges and Universities. Currently, more than 1000 institutions with various programs are approved in Virginia.

The **State Approving Agency (SAA)** ensures access and quality instruction, appropriate administration, and fair and equitable practices for every Veteran (and eligible person) who enters a Virginia SAA-approved educational or training program. SAA has been protecting the GI Bill® Since 1948.

SAA focuses on:

- Validating and approving education and training courses and programs to be pursued by Veterans and eligible persons;
- Overseeing Virginia's educational and training institutions, and ensuring compliance with federal and state guidelines;
- Ensuring the interests and prerogatives of the State are preserved in both processes;
- Providing approval and oversight activities within the state's boundaries; and
- Protecting Veterans and schools from fraud, waste and abuse

The **Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)** is a Virginia program which provides education benefits to spouses and children of qualified veterans or military service members who, during direct involvement in covered military combat, were killed, missing in action, or became a prisoner of war; or who, as a direct result of such service, have been rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled and have been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

Ms. Carroll-Payne thanked the JLC for their efforts and stewardship of VMSDEP over the years and gave them an update on how they have been working to update the program based on legislation passed in 2019.

As of July 1, there are now two tiers to VMSDEP:

- Tier 1
  - Admitted to a Virginia public College or University
  - Totally and permanently disabled or 90% permanently disabled
  - Qualifies for tuition / mandatory fee waiver
- Tier 2
  - Admitted to a Virginia public College or University
  - Totally and permanently disabled or 90% permanently disabled due to direct involvement in covered military combat
  - Qualifies for tuition/mandatory fee waiver
  - Qualifies for a stipend (dependent on funding)

Ms. Carroll-Payne opened it up for questions. Mr. Cuthbertson asked about community colleges in the VMSDEP and if they are included. Ms. Carroll-Payne assured him they are included in the phrase "Virginia's public colleges and universities." He said the language was vague and may confuse people. She told him she would take that into consideration and look into making the website more explicit that community colleges are included.

Ms. Alford mentioned at the conclusion of the presentation that this team has been working since March when both Senator McPike's and Delegate Torian's bills went to the Governor to ensure everything would be adjusted and up and running ahead of July 1 and they had done a lot of work on this. The JLC gave them a round of applause.

Mr. Huges McLean picked up the presentation and briefed the JLC on the Training and Education Alliance. The **Training and Education Alliance (TEA)** aims to strengthen DVS partnerships with education and training Institutions, to build the Virginia veteran workforce to meet the growing talent demands of employers for well-educated, trained and certified veterans. Together we can maximize

military-related student success both in the classroom and in the civilian workforce.

Mr. McLean works with schools in:

- Identifying and promoting employment pipelines,
- Providing military cultural sensitivity training to education staff, and
- Promoting and participating in community service initiatives.

Mr. Bill Ashton asked if the internships mentioned are registered with the U.S. Dept. of Labor? Mr. McLean said that most are, but not all, and if not, he works with the state Dept. of Labor and Instruction (DOLI) to make sure they are promoted at the state level.

Mr. Mike Flanagan asked if he is reaching the veterans at TAP classes, on campus or elsewhere? Mr. McLean said yes, TAP classes at Fort Lee and Fort Eustis and he works with the veterans groups on campuses as well as the faculty and staff.

Commissioner Newby said this is an important question in this is where we have to decide where we specialize and how we decide what the touchpoints are. All our Education teams are part of the ecosystem and all provide outreach and tag team on presenting on all education programs.

Mr. John Cooper asked if Mr. McLean is going to all the schools in Virginia? Mr. McLean said that once a school reaches out and become certified then he go to the school to give a full briefing and help them along. Mr. Cooper asked why he does not cold call all the schools?

Commissioner Newby said we do it by request because of DVS and the schools' procedures.

Ms. Alford added that Mr. McLean is already out of the office most of the time and works very hard and if DVS asked him to cold call schools as well he may leave us.

The powerpoint presentation was distributed to the members after the meeting, and is available upon request.

### **Presentation on DVS Education Programs at the Virginia War Memorial**

Dr. Clay Mountcastle gave a short presentation on the various educational programs offered through the War Memorial and those they do in partnership with other organizations.

Mr. Jim Triesler, Director of Education and Ms. Morgan Guyer, the Assistant Director of Education were unable to attend the meeting as they were in Roanoke leading a Summer Teacher Institute day. There have been many requests for teacher training on how to present WWII, Vietnam and other wars in the classrooms. The VWM developed this program to educate Virginia teachers, provide lesson plans and *Virginians at War* films and other materials. The staff has had the chance to get to know the educators around the state and what they need. VWM provides some WWII and Vietnam veterans to come into classrooms and talk to the students and share their personal stories, as well as events at the VWM where veterans come and talk to school children about war.

As part of the Commonwealth's commemoration of the 100th and 75th anniversaries of WWI and WWII, and as a means to explore and share the countless resources Virginia offers for learning the Commission has partnered with VWM and other groups across Virginia for two years to host a series of 12 symposiums across the state. In July 2019, the two final symposiums were held in Richmond and Staunton. The programs were open free to educators in Virginia, and attendees received certificates

confirming six hours of professional development.

Dr. Mountcastle talked about the new *Virginians at War* film, ***The Missing Chapter: Saigon to the Gulf War*** which includes interviews with Retired Generals Tilelli, Zinni, and Flowers, who all live in Virginia. The film will examine the US military's rebuild from Vietnam to dominance in the Persian Gulf – How did we go from the low of 1975 to the high of 1991 in just 16 years?

The premiere event will be at Virginia War Memorial on 8 November 2019 and the JLC will be invited to attend. Also in attendance will be CSM Jeff Mellinger (Ret.), known as the last active Vietnam draftee, who then spent 34 years in the military and retired as Chief Sergeant Major.

Dr. Mountcastle talked about the Mighty Pen Project, a free creative writing class for veterans, led by David Robbins, who teaches veterans creative writing and personal expression. 12 week program that meets one night a week. Classes start in January, April or September. This year there will be a playwriting class and the VWM is working with David to create a mini play festival with the veterans who write plays in the course. MPP is held in Richmond, although with planning and coordination, it has done satellites with VFW and other groups in the Shenandoah Valley.

Mr. Boyer asked if there was any opposition from teachers? Dr. Mountcastle said yes, in some cases, but disagreements are among the teachers as to what is appropriate to show and teach to what age levels. VWM is in tune to the ages of the students and how to talk to them, but do take teacher comments into consideration.

Mr. Walt Mercer asked if you can take the Teacher Institute classes anywhere in the state? Dr. Mountcastle said yes, and they are held all over the state. VWM plans each year on where to have them and tries to get to all eight districts. VWM partners with local organizations to reach a wider audience and do more events. The teachers do get recertification credits with the Department of Education.

Mr. Tim Whitmore asked if there is a central point to learn about all of these programs? Dr. Mountcastle said yes, it is all on the VWM website. Ms. Alford said she would include the link in the follow up email.

The powerpoint presentation was distributed to the members after the meeting, and is available upon request.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Mr. Dan Boyer, Chair of the Nominating Committee, reminded the members of the protocol for electing new officers and announced the candidate for Chairman: Frank G. Wickersham, III MOAA representative. Mr. Boyer asked for any additional nominations. Hearing none, he called the vote. Mr. Wickersham was elected **unanimously**. Mr. Boyer announced the candidate for Vice Chairman: William "Bill" Ashton Fleet Reserve Association representative. Mr. Boyer asked for any additional nominations. Hearing none, he called the vote. Mr. Ashton was elected **unanimously**. (*Attachment 4*)

Mr. Boyer stated that per the JLC Constitution "Newly elected officers will assume the responsibility of the position to which they were elected at the conclusion of the meeting during which election occurs." As Mr. Wickersham was the Chairman for the previous term, he maintained the responsibility of the position upon adjournment.

### **Introduction of Two Letters to Governor Northam**

Chairman Wickersham presented to letters drafted on behalf of the full JLC to Governor Northam. The first letter was the letter JLC members had voted during the April 17 meeting to have drafted, as part of their action plan after receiving the briefing on the Governor's Challenge from Ms. Brandi Jancaitis. (*JLC minutes for April 17, 2019 page 7*) The second letter was drafted in conversation with DVS staff regarding the JLC maintaining their long-standing support for the Veteran Care Centers and the need to include funding in the new biennial budget for FY2021-22. The letter is needed because the timeline for the Governor's staff to review budgetary requests and make determinations on what to include in their introduced budget is from August to October, well ahead of the JLC timeline.

Mr. Cuthbertson requested that the final sentence on the first letter be shortened and end at "families in Virginia" and strike ", and ending the epidemic of suicide." So that the JLC would not be viewed as supporting the media's take on calling this an "epidemic." There was no objection and Ms. Alford made the edit to the letter.

Chairman Wickersham made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Dan Boyer to approve the letters to Governor Northam and have them conveyed to him by Ms. Alford. The motion carried **unanimously**. (*Attachment 5*)

### **Introduction of Potential Policy Papers for 2019**

Mr. Sitler began by referring everyone to the page in their packets that was titled "Ranking of PROPOSED 2020 JLC Policy Initiatives" and that it says in red "NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION BEYOND THE JLC." He said he would call each paper in order that it is on this top sheet and the sponsor would explain the paper briefly in 1-2 minutes. Relevant, basic questions could be asked, but discussion and debate was to be saved for October on the papers that survive to that meeting. Today's task was to determine which papers will continue moving forward and which are not ready and should be put in the "parking lot." All 10 papers are included as *Attachment 6*.

Ms. Lauren Augustine, IAVA rep, presented the first paper by phone: **Counting Military Service as Credit in Teacher Salaries - OBJECTIVE:** That every military transitioning service member and veteran who enters the teaching field in Virginia should be given credit for their service up to six years, and veterans with a Masters should be given an additional \$10,000 per year.

Ms. Augustine discussed the main points and need for teachers in Virginia.

Mr. Flanagan asked how many veterans are currently teachers in Virginia?

Mr. Boyer asked if localities are the ones who have to come up with the funds?

Mr. Icenhour stated that as a member of the James City County Board of Supervisors he could say that yes the localities would have to come up with the additional funds. He thought this would get through the General Assembly easily as it would be an unfunded mandate on the localities.

Ms. Alford recorded the questions for further research.



Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Sitler made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Boyer to accept **Counting Military Service as Credit in Teacher Salaries** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. John Cooper, AMVETS rep, and Mr. Wickersham both presented the second paper: **Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day - OBJECTIVE**: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to fully support of our military servicemen and women who are serving overseas, by enabling returned overseas military ballots to be counted when received after the polls close and before 5:00 p.m. on the second day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the election results.

Mr. Cooper reiterating some of the points made in previous years about the former position paper regarding absentee voting and stated that this paper is based on a bill Senator Surovell patroned in 2018 but did not get out of committee. He said he would do more research to try and find out why it stalled in committee. It addresses the concerns of past opposition and is a low-tech, manageable first step. The JLC needs to stay focused on voting but it is more important to get a win on some policy and build on that and this paper could do that.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Boyer made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Whitmore to accept **Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Dave Sitler, presented the next paper as the Reserve Officers Association rep: **JLC Support of the Governor's Commonwealth Connect Plan - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians - OBJECTIVE**: To assure veterans in rural Virginia have reliable access to telehealth services, as well as education and business opportunities through universal broadband. Mr. Sitler read through the paper and asked for comments.

Mr. Boyer said this was definitely needed, as recently he drove a veteran up to the Salem VAMC a 4-hour round trip car ride for a 15 minute appointment where the veteran was handed some equipment and told to "push this button before you go to sleep." If the veteran had broadband internet access the VAMC could have mailed him the equipment and given him the instructions online through their telemedicine program.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Boyer made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Ashton to accept **JLC Support of the Governor's Commonwealth Connect Plan - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Carl Holcomb, VaANGEA alternate rep presented the fourth paper: **Tax Credits for Employers who Hire National Guard and Reserves - OBJECTIVE**: To ensure Individual and corporate income tax credit; employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard. He said this had been presented in 2019 as legislation by Delegate Freitas and it is needed because employers do not want to hire guard and reserves because the old model of 2 weekends a month and 2 weeks a year is gone. Guard and Reserve units train constantly and can be gone from work for up to 4 weeks per year.

Mr. Mercer, VNGA alternate rep and Chief of Staff to The Adjutant General, agreed and reminded the JLC of his presentation to them last year.

Several members asked about the financial impact and how that would be assessed. Ms. Alford said she would work with the Dept. of Taxation and the sponsor of the paper to answer the question by October.

Chairman Wickersham asked if the federal WOTC could be used as a model? Mr. Holcomb said he did not know but would look into it.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Sitler made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Mumm to accept **Tax Credits for Employers who Hire National Guard and Reserves** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Mike Flanagan, AUSA rep, presented the fifth paper: **Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP) - OBJECTIVE**: To establish the Microloans for Veterans Program, through the Virginia Small Business Financing Authority's system of microloans, available solely to Virginia veteran entrepreneurs establishing business ventures based in Virginia. Mr. Flanagan gave a thorough report on how this paper had been researched and updated by graduate students from William and Mary and was now a different paper from the one presented in 2018.

Ms. Alford added that the tier 2 funds would come from DVS and VSBFA working with the financial institutions that are V3 companies and vouch for the veterans who successfully complete tier one. This makes them a more attractive candidate for a small business loan, the bank gets all the interest and credit for assisting the veteran and the JLC can now with a much better confidence answer the question of "how far with a \$1 million fund go?"

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Sitler made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Flanagan to accept **Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP)** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Walter Mercer, VNGA alternate rep, presented the sixth paper: **Virginia National Guard Scholarship Program - OBJECTIVE**: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth to the Virginia National Guard through a scholarship program covering tuition costs for accredited Virginia colleges and universities, certification programs, community colleges and trade schools. Mr. Mercer said this was the revised policy idea from previous efforts at tuition assistance and should calm fears and answer legislator questions. There is a low probability for fraud as the guardsman will be paid retroactively after completing the semester or course by showing the registration, grade and other transcripts to his/her CO who then signs off on the funds being released.

There was discussion from several members to make that more explicit in the paper because that is not currently clear. Ms. Alford said she would work with Mrs. Russell and the sponsor to edit the paper to better reflect the goal.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Sitler made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Cuthbertson to accept **Virginia National Guard Scholarship Program** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Walter Mercer, VNGA alternate rep, presented the seventh paper: **Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay - OBJECTIVE**: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard through raising the minimum Emergency Response Pay (ERP) to the equivalent of a service member with the rank of E-6 (Staff Sergeant) with 18 years of service, which is currently just over \$125 per day. Mr. Mercer said this was the revised paper from last year's state active duty pay paper – the Guard realized that calling it “state active duty” caused problems and legislators only heard “active duty” and long discussions occurred and it took a long time to get the conversation back on track.

The VNG is currently looking at what North Carolina is doing.

Mr. Merchant asked if it can be scaled for all ranks because an 18-year old clearing brush should not be paid the same as someone with a decade of rank and experience.

**NAME** asked if VDOT maintenance pay could be used as a model? Ms. Alford said she would work with VNGA to research that before October.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Sitler made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Mercer to accept **Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Ms. Denice Williams, DAV rep, presented the eighth paper: **2<sup>nd</sup> Resolution - Personal Property Tax Relief for Certain Disabled Veterans - OBJECTIVE**: To create a unified, cohesive, state-wide system for personal property tax relief to certain disabled veterans.

Ms. Williams read through the paper, reiterating some of the points made in the paper and that the idea is the same as last year – to use the same qualifications as the real property tax exemption and have it administered by the localities like the real property tax exemption.

Ms. Alford stated that with this year's opposition from VACO and VML, it would be wise to continue to show JLC support for the initiative and keep it on the list.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Boyer made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Sitler to accept **2<sup>nd</sup> Resolution - Personal Property Tax Relief for Certain Disabled Veterans** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Bill Ashton, FRA rep, presented the ninth paper: **Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income - OBJECTIVE**: To reform the Virginia state tax law,

creating a phased in system to exempt a portion of military retirement income beginning in 2020.

Mr. Ashton read through the paper, reiterating some of the points made in the paper that the idea is to create a phased-in system for exempting military retiree pay as most states do something. Mr. Ashton said that there are 59,563 retirees in Virginia, but he is unable to get any data on how many have left and moved to other states because of tax exemptions. He stated that this year the paper is a phased-in system for retirees who are 65 years old or older. He mentioned that while the paper did not succeed, Delegate Torian requested a study. Virginia is one of 9 states that do not offer any form of exemption from income taxes for retirees.

Ms. Alford stated that the working group convened from Delegate Torian's HJ674 to study the issue is working hard and should be finished with the report by October and hopefully will be able to give a presentation to the JLC at their October 16 meeting.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Whitmore made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Mumm to accept **Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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Mr. Rick Oertel, AL rep, presented the tenth and final paper: **Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans - OBJECTIVE**: To allow individual income tax subtraction for the amount of annual retirement compensation received service as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, or the Virginia National Guard, for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federally adjusted gross income not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household. No subtraction would be permitted if another Virginia subtraction or deduction for such service has been claimed.

Mr. Oertel read through the paper, reiterating some of the points made in the paper and noting that they now have a firm estimate of how many veterans in Virginia this will benefit, thanks to the assistance of VA Headquarters staff in Washington, D.C. The estimate is 1,371 veterans may apply for and benefit from the tax exemption.

Chairman Wickersham called the question. Mr. Oertel made a motion, **seconded** by Mr. Sitler to accept **Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans** as a JLC priority for 2020. The motion passed **unanimously**.

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After all the papers had been voted on and approved to move forward, Mr. Sitler gave the Council some reminders about the next phase of the process – if questions were raised about their paper they need to find the answers and edit the paper before the October meeting. They should reach out to potential patrons and have a recommendation at the October meeting.

Mr. Ashton added that in discussions with legislators it should be understood that the potential patron might not be back after Election Day and to the patron that the paper may not move forward after the October meeting. Patrons will be finalized after election day.

Ms. Alford stated that due to several retirements and competitive House and Senate races this year the General Assembly may look very different in January and to not get too tied to a legislator as the patron. She also requested everyone who was not a paper sponsor to work with their VSO to choose a paper to co-sponsor. If all 10 move forward, that is 20 VSOs invested in a paper, with five remaining VSOs “at large” and assisting with all the papers.

She also said the main focus between now and the October meeting is to polish up the papers, make the research solid, answer all the questions and gather support.

### **Other New Business and Open Discussion**

Chairman Wickersham asked the members to consider one of the open appointed officer positions. Dave Sitler needs committee members for the legislative committee. The Chair said he would volunteer and looking for others. He said the NOVA Veteran Treatment Docket rep is also open. (*Attachment 7*)

Ms. Alford had two items for new business, first she stated that the JLC members are free to engage in any of the numerous campaigns going on in Virginia this year, however, they must never participate in any campaign-related event as a JLC member, or wearing their JLC pin. The JLC is a non-partisan organization that advocates before all 140 legislators.

Secondly, in response to several questions, she stated that she is not leaving DVS any time soon and her new side business that several members had learned about was just that – a side business and the Secretary and Commissioner had been fully briefed.

Mr. Ashton handed out a flyer for a VA claims event in Cary, North Carolina coming up in September. He also read an email from Deputy Commissioner Tom Herthel, which stated:

*“We’ve explored this option a couple of time in the past, but it’s entirely up to the VA’s assigned Regional Office to support. The Roanoke RO has not been interested since it takes adjudicators out of their rotation and slows down overall “production.” They view it as a “PR” move in NC. There are also a few risks in the program. If a veteran agrees to the adjudication and does not have 100% of what the VA needs to adjudicate the claim, it will be denied, leaving only the long appeals road as an option. Veterans are required to withdraw all pending claims before the VA will adjudicate their claim on the spot. For some, this is a very poor decision. Still, it can be good deal for certain veterans willing to drive to NC. Currently, claims are getting adjudicated in 2-3 months...not the 18-24 months of a few years ago. Hope this helps. Tom”*

### **Public Comment**

There was one individual who spoke during public comment. Mr. Richard Creal from the federal agency GSA and manages the program of surplus federal office furniture and supplies that veterans and VSOs are supposed to have first chance to purchase at a discount. He said no one knows about the program and he would like to give a formal presentation to the JLC.

Ms. Alford said outside groups are not able to give formal presentations to the JLC but she would speak with him after the meeting and see if they could work something out.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

**Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations  
American Legion Building  
1708 Commonwealth Ave., Richmond VA  
July 24, 2019  
10:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.**

### **REVISED PROPOSED AGENDA**

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Vice Chairman* (10:00 – 10:05)
  - II. Opening Thoughts, *Denice Williams, JLC Chaplain* (10:05 – 10:10)
  - III. Roll call of VSOs, quorum determination, and introduction of guests (10:10 – 10:20)
  - IV. Introduction of new JLC member representative – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Vice Chairman* (10:20 – 10:25)
  - V. Approval of meeting Agenda; Approval of April 17, 2019 meeting minutes – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Vice Chairman* (10:25 – 10:30)
  - VI. Reports (10:30 – 10:45)
    - a. Board of Veterans Services – *Jim Icenhour, BVS Chairman*
    - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *Jack Hilgers, VSF member*
    - c. DVS Construction & Overview Report, *John Newby, DVS Commissioner*
  - VII. Update DVS Education programs, *Martina Murray, Director of Education Programs* (10:45 – 11:05)
  - VIII. Update on Education programs at and through the Virginia War Memorial, *Clay Mountcastle, VWM Director* (11:05 – 11:25)
  - IX. BREAK
  - X. New Business (11:35 – 12:50)
    - a. Election of Chair and Vice Chair, *Dan Boyer, JLC Nominations Committee Chair* (11:35 – 11:40)
    - b. Introduction of potential initiatives for 2019, *Dave Sitler, JLC Legislative Chair* (11:40 – 12:05)
      - i. 2 Letters to Governor Northam, *Frank Wickersham, Chairman*
      - ii. 10 potential papers, *introduced by paper sponsor*
    - c. Vote on each proposed initiative to continue forward or be rejected for 2019, *Dave Sitler, JLC Legislative Chair* (12:05 – 12:15)
    - d. Other New Business and Open Discussion – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Vice Chairman* (12:15 – 12:35)
  - XI. Public comment period (12:35 – 12:40)
  - XII. Closing remarks, Announcement of next meeting – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Vice Chairman* (12:40 – 12:45)
  - XIII. Adjourn (12:45)
- Lunch to follow

**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**REPORT TO THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE  
ORGANIZATIONS (JLC)**  
**July 24, 2019**

Since the last JLC meeting, the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) met on May 2, 2019 at the Virginia National Guard Headquarters in Richmond.

At our May meeting we had two very informative presentations. DVS Policy Director Carrie Ann Alford provided a review of 2019 DVS legislation and budget outcomes, and Mary Roberts of the Eastern Virginia Medical Schools discussed her organization's ongoing partnership with our Virginia Veterans and Family Service (VVFS) efforts.

Two pieces of DVS legislation that affect the BVS and have been signed by the Governor, will add three seats to BVS as of January 1, 2020 as well as the Chairman of the War Memorial Foundation Board as *ex officio*. Additionally, on January 1, 2020 the Virginia War Memorial Board will sunset and BVS will assume all duties of support to the Virginia War Memorial.

We received progress reports from our three new working groups: Benefits, Carl Bedell, Chair; Education, Mike Dick, Chair; and Veterans and the Arts, Julie Waters, Chair. All three groups have one year to conduct their research and report their findings and recommendations. We expect progress reports at our August meeting and final reports at our November meeting.

The BVS consists of twenty-two members: fourteen citizen members, five legislators, and three *ex officio* members. Board members are in regular contact with the Department of Veterans Services to provide policy input on key operational issues.

Our next meeting will be at the State Cemetery at Amelia on Thursday, August 22 at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Icenhour  
Chairman

### **ATTACHMENT 3**

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees has held one Board meeting since the last JLC meeting on April 17, 2019. The VSF met on June 13, 2019 at the State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia. The Development and Finance Committees also met on the same date and at the same location. The Procedures and Policies met on May 22, 2019 in Richmond.

The Development Committee discussed the Foundation's revenue priorities for FY20 that includes the importance of strong collaboration with DVS to increase donations. The Foundation depends on the support of DVS to assist identify program priorities, provide leads for organizations and potential fundraising events, and to effectively integrate social media in its outreach and fundraising efforts. It was agreed that an aggressive push was needed to identify "third party" funds similar to the following programs in which the Foundation currently participates: Dominion Energy Charity Classic Birdies for Charity, Amazon Smile, Kroger Community Rewards and Corporate Matching Gift Programs.

The Finance Committee reviewed the May (FM11) financial report. Both the VVFS Direct Veterans Services and the VVFS Homeless Veterans Fund have high average yearly expenditures which need to be considered when making decisions for the upcoming budget. As of May 31, 2019, the VVFS Homeless Fund donations totaled \$185,050 with expenditures at \$204,201. The spending is still within the budget for FY19. DVS has been asked to submit their anticipated high/low budget requirements for FY21-FY22 and to present those budgets for approval at the September Board of Trustees meeting.

The Procedures and Policies Committee met in Richmond a few weeks prior to the Board meeting. The committee reviewed and recommended the DVS VSF Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the revised Bylaws be presented for approval before the Board. Efforts to update the Foundation's policies continued. The recommended MOU and Foundation Bylaws were approved by the Board.

It is projected that the Foundation will close FY19 with over \$627,000 in donations and expenditures approaching \$700,000, just below the aggregate DVS budget of \$796,500 for FY19. The final totals will be available from DVS Finance by the end of July. The Foundation remains committed to increasing donations to sustain the rate of expense and looks forward to working with DVS as they present their anticipated needs for our Virginia Veterans and their families for the upcoming years. A strong collaboration between the Foundation and DVS will result in identifying and assisting additional Veterans and their families, who are in need.

For major donors, the Smithfield check presentation for \$150,000 benefitting the VVFS Homeless Veteran Fund is scheduled for August 22, 2019. The 2019 Dominion Energy Charity Classic is scheduled for October 17-19 at the Country Club of Virginia in Richmond. A portion of those proceeds will benefit the V3 program.

The Foundation welcomed Jack Hilgers to the Board of Trustees. Elections for FY20 officers were held and the Board elected Frank Finelli as Chair, Jack Hilgers as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair and Al Pianalto as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair. Four retiring Trustees were also honored for their dedicated service throughout the years. These were Meade Spotts, Jim Boyd, Rich Schollmann and Tom Mulrine.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2019 at the America Legion Department HQ.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank Finelli

Chairman

Veterans Services Foundation



## ATTACHMENT 4

# Election of Officers - 2019

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Women Marines Association*

Election of officers will be held every year during the regular third quarter meeting. Elections will be by voice vote unless the presiding officer deems a show of hands to be needed.

Per the JLC Constitution: “Newly elected officers will assume the responsibility of the position to which they were elected at the conclusion of the meeting during which election occurs.”

Elections shall be decided by a majority of the votes cast by raising of hands.

Candidate for Chair:

**Frank G. Wickersham, III**  
MOAA Rep

Candidate for Vice-Chair:

**William “Bill” Ashton**  
Fleet Reserve Association Rep

## ATTACHMENT 5

### *Letters to Governor Northam*



101 N. 14TH STREET, 17<sup>TH</sup> FL.  
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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

July 25, 2019

Governor Ralph S. Northam  
Patrick Henry Building  
1111 E. Broad St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

On behalf of the Joint Leadership Council, I write to share that we have been briefed on, and are in full support of the *Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Their Families*.

Ms. Brandi Jancaitis, Military and Veterans Affairs Manager for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) gave an excellent presentation at our April 17 meeting on Virginia's selection by SAMSA as one of seven states selected to participate in this important challenge.

The JLC hopes that focus on this important issue in Virginia will lead to potential cutting-edge solutions and policies. We stand ready to assist you and the members of this Challenge in any way needed. As a starting place, at our April 17 meeting, we voted unanimously on the following:

1. Make a commitment to pass out the cards from the Governor's challenge;
2. Put the information about the Governor's Challenge and presentation on suicide prevention in VSO newsletters; and
3. JLC will send a formal letter through the Chairman to the Governor supporting the Challenge and committing to support its' efforts.

The JLC has always, and will continue to, support ready access to behavioral health resources, as well as high-quality traditional and alternative treatments for trauma-related conditions and traumatic brain injuries that occur as a result of military service. This is vital to support our veterans and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this critical project for the health and well-being of veterans and their families in Virginia.

Sincerely,

Frank G. Wickersham, III

cc: Secretary Carlos Hopkins  
Secretary Dan Carey  
DVS Interim Commissioner Steven J. Combs



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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

July 25, 2019

Governor Ralph S. Northam  
Patrick Henry Building  
1111 E. Broad St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

On behalf of the Joint Leadership Council, I write to share that we have been briefed on the funding necessary to open and operate our two new veterans care centers – the *Puller Veterans Care Center* and the *Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center* – and we recommend this funding should be part of your introduced biennial budget for FY2021-22 to show the continued, strong support for this project begun by Governor McAuliffe and Delegate Kirk Cox and the General Assembly.

The JLC dedicated policy initiative papers in 2015 (2015-06) to provide the funding necessary to ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia with the construction of veterans care centers in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia, and provided “ground support” for Delegate Cox and former Senator Puller, who were the legislative patrons. In 2016, (2016-01) the JLC made it our top priority to approval additional state bond funding in the biennial budget to allow for the construction of both centers. And again, we worked closely with the Governor and General Assembly to accomplish this goal.

The JLC has always, and will continue to, support our commonwealth-run veterans care centers. Virginia’s veterans care centers deliver skilled nursing, Alzheimer’s/ dementia care, and short-term rehabilitation, to Virginia veterans. This is vital to support our veterans and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for this critical funding.

Sincerely,

Frank G. Wickersham, III  
Chairman  
MOAA Representative

cc: Secretary Carlos Hopkins  
DVS Interim Commissioner Steven J. Combs

## ATTACHMENT6



101 N. 14TH ST, 17<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
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### COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

#### Summary of PROPOSED 2020 JLC Policy Initiatives **NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION BEYOND THE JLC**

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Counting Military Service as Credit in Teacher Salaries</i>	That the General Assembly and Governor appropriate funds sufficient to enact reforms for Virginia veterans to enter the teaching profession and be paid commensurate with their experience.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>JLC Supports Commonwealth Connect - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate the full \$50M for VATI to help Virginia's progress towards universal broadband access.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day</i>	That the General Assembly enact and the Governor sign legislation that directs Virginia registrars receive and count military overseas absentee ballots postmarked on or before election day and which arrive by 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the results of the election.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP)</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly provide an appropriation in the amount of \$1,000,000 in FY20 and \$1,000,000 in FY21 for the Microloan for Veterans Program fund.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Tax Credits for Employers who Hire VNG and Reserves.</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve Tax credits for employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard members.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen are paid at least at the E6 rate when they are called to SAD in emergency situations.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Virginia National Guard Scholarship</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support for a Virginia National Guard Scholarship program to fully cover Guardsmen seeking a degree or certification.

<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly support changes to the current Virginia tax laws for a phased in system to reduce state tax on military retirement income up to \$40,000, for retirees 65 years of age or older.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federally adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.
<b>JLC 2020-XX</b> <i>2nd Resolution – Personal Property Tax Exemption</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve legislation, and send to the voters via ballot initiative, creating a standardized, statewide personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for 100% service-connected, total and permanent disabled veterans.

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Guard Enlisted  
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Virginia National Guard  
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Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2020

JLC Contact  
**IAVA**  
Lauren Augustine  
[lauren.ml.augustine@  
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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx Counting Military Service as Credit in Teacher Salaries

**OBJECTIVE:** That every military transitioning service member and veteran who enters the teaching field in Virginia should be given credit for their service up to six years, and veterans with a Masters should be given an additional \$10,000 per year.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Currently, a service member at the rate of E-5 with 4 years of service earns \$2,804/mo. and receives a housing allowance of \$1,533/mo., and does not pay insurance, which equals a salary of \$4,337 a month.
- A teacher with 5 years teaching credit for the 2018-19 school year in Virginia, and a Masters' degree is paid an average of \$3,939.18/mo.
- If that veteran with a Masters received 4 years of military service as teaching credit, their salary would raise \$166/mo. to \$4,105.40 a month.
- However, this is still less than what they made in the military, or could make in other states. For example, in Ohio, a teacher with the above experience and Masters will earn \$1,600 more per month than their veteran counterpart in Virginia.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Nearly 940 teaching positions went unfilled in Virginia at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, not including those lost to neighboring states.
- This proposal is a fiscally responsible first step, making teaching a competitive, viable profession and a financial possibility to veterans, over the current pay rates and steps.
- This is one more way to be both veteran-friendly and ensure enlisted military personnel with valuable skills remain in Virginia, and education-friendly by providing highly skilled teachers for our children.
- For taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2020, compensation packages to new and current teachers in Virginia who are veterans of the U.S. armed forces should accurately reflect their education and experience in the military, with credit for their years of service, up to six years.
- Additionally, funding should be appropriated so that veterans with a Masters degree in the field of study, or similar to, the subject they will teach, then they would receive an additional \$10,000 in pay per year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the General Assembly and Governor appropriate funds sufficient to enact reforms for Virginia veterans to enter the teaching profession and be paid commensurate with their experience.

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS



## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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Guard Enlisted  
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Virginia National Guard  
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Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2020

### JLC Contact

#### **MOAA**

Frank Wickersham  
Email

#### **AMVETS**

John Cooper  
Email

### Position Paper 2020-xx Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to fully support of our military servicemen and women who are serving overseas, by enabling returned overseas military ballots to be counted when received after the polls close and before 5:00 p.m. on the second day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the election results.

### **BACKGROUND:**

- Currently, absentee ballots received by the local registrar after 7:00 p.m. on Election Day are not counted.
- In 2017, over 50 overseas absentee ballots arrived for the 28<sup>th</sup> House of Delegates race the morning after the election – but they were not counted. Even though the margin was razor thin and a recount was called, those ballots were never counted.
- While federal law allows the military to register to vote and request a ballot by electronic means, in Virginia those voted ballots cannot be returned electronically, but must be returned via “snail mail.”
- Mail delays are common, especially for those servicemembers in remote or hostile areas. The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act requires that all [absentee] ballots be mailed to service members not less than 45 days before an election, however, at least 36 days may be needed to transmit the ballots – and that is without shipping delays.

### **DISCUSSION:**

- In 2018, Senator Surovell patroned SB771 to solve this problem, but it did not make it out of committee.
- After the November 2018 election, the State Board of Elections (SBE), reported over 6,770 absentee ballots were returned after polls closed and were not counted.
- The JLC has been working to find a solution to the disenfranchisement of Virginia military men and women since 2013. This is a sensible solution that addresses the privacy concerns brought up by Verified Voters.
- This solution is low-tech, cost effective and easily implemented by the localities to ensure the enfranchisement of our deployed military.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the General Assembly enact and the Governor sign legislation that directs Virginia registrars receive and count military overseas absentee ballots postmarked on or before election day and which arrive by 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the results of the election.

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS



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DATE, 2020

JLC Contact

ROA

David Sitler

804-986-0603

dksitler@aol.com

## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx

### JLC Support of the Governor's Commonwealth Connect Plan - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians

**OBJECTIVE:** To assure veterans in rural Virginia have reliable access to telehealth services, as well as education and business opportunities through universal broadband.

**BACKGROUND:**

- In 2019, the Governor created the Commonwealth Connect Coalition – broadband providers, localities, Fortune 500 companies, VSOs and other diverse organizations – with the goal of universal coverage and supporting the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI).
- VATI supports broadband expansion to unserved communities by partnering with localities and private sector providers, and the Governor sought to increase funding for VATI to \$50 million, from the \$4 million budgeted.
- As of June 2019, there were 92 members of the Commonwealth Connect Coalition, including several VSOs represented on the JLC.
- In the final budget, the GA appropriated \$19 million in FY20 funds for VATI.

**DISCUSSION:**

- The JLC believes all 725,000 Virginia veterans deserve access to quality broadband and the opportunity to fully participate in modern American life, not just those in the "Eastern Crescent."
- The Northam Administration estimates there are 600,000 Virginians without access to the internet. This number includes at least 150,000 veterans.
- Rural veterans are substantially more likely to enroll in the VA health care system than urban veterans, but live further from medical facilities, thereby needing reliable internet service to access VA telehealth services.
- A report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Amazon, *Unlocking the Digital Potential of Rural America*, estimates that for Virginia, the increased access to digital tools would result in \$452M in annual wages, and \$1.29B added overall to the state GDP per year.
- Universal broadband service will provide veterans in rural areas with more opportunities to take advantage of their GI Bill benefits through online education programs.
- Universal broadband service will provide veterans the opportunity to become entrepreneurs and start up small businesses in small towns and rural communities, adding to the New Virginia Economy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate the full \$50M for VATI to help Virginia's progress towards universal broadband access.

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Virginia Army/Air National  
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Virginia National Guard  
Association  
Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2019

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Robert Barnette  
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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx Tax Credits for Employers who Hire National Guard and Reserves

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure Individual and corporate income tax credit; employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Provides for taxable years 2019 through 2023 a non-refundable tax credit against individual and corporate income taxes for wages paid by an employer to an employee who is a Virginia National Guard member or Reserves.
- Income of a self-employed National Guard member or Reservist attributable to his business would also qualify for a non-refundable tax credit against individual and corporate income taxes for wages paid for taxable years 2020 through 2024.
- For taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2020, but before January 1, 2025, a self-employed National Guard member shall be allowed a credit against the tax levied pursuant to § 58.1-320 or 58.1-400 for income attributable to his trade or business during the taxable year.

**DISCUSSION:**

- The amount of the credit shall be:
  - 25%, if such member was in a military pay status for 65 days or more during such taxable year; or
  - 15% if such member was in a military pay status for 45 days or more during such taxable year.
- The credit should not be allowed if such member was in a military pay status for less than 45 days during such taxable year.
- The taxpayer should be allowed to carry unused credits over for up to five taxable years within the taxable years of 2024 to 2028.
- The amount of the credit claimed shall not exceed the total amount of tax imposed pursuant to § 58.1-320 or 58.1-400 upon the employer for the taxable year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly approve Tax credits for employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard members.

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Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2020

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Mike Flanagan  
email

## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP)

**OBJECTIVE:** To establish the Microloans for Veterans Program, through the Virginia Small Business Financing Authority's system of microloans, available solely to Virginia veteran entrepreneurs establishing business ventures based in Virginia.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

- Entrepreneurship is the "third leg of the stool," (along with Education and Employment) for Virginia veterans. It is a key for veterans and the New Virginia Economy.
- Current programs, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Boots to Business program, Bunker Labs, Capital Post, and the Arsenal are focused on training and mentorship and businesses that are established and can provide proof of revenue. SBA loans can be almost impossible for veteran start-ups to access.
- The Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA) is Virginia's business and economic development financing arm, providing financing for small businesses and economic growth in Virginia. The VSBFA already has the authority to administer microloan programs and are willing to administer a microloan for veteran entrepreneurs.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- MVP would place veteran entrepreneurs on a more equal footing with civilian entrepreneurs and encourage the growth of small businesses in Virginia.
- MVP sets up a public-private partnership between VSBFA, DVS, Virginia Community College System and private banks to assist veterans and incentivize veterans to complete financial education and business planning classes with lower interest rates (1-2% below market rate) and extended payback periods.
- The program would have two tiers –
  - a) Tier 1: Loan amounts up to \$10,000 through VSBFA; Requirements: Honorably discharged, minimum credit credentials, repayment and interest rate terms set by VSBFA, and a willingness to sign on to education and mentorship requirements, unless comparable credentials can be produced.
  - b) Tier 2: Loan amounts up to \$50,000 through Virginia banking institutions (such as V3 partners); Requirements: Successfully completed all education and mentorship requirements of Tier 1 and paid back the loan early or on time.
- The two tiered system minimizes risk, keeps state funds circulating more quickly and promotes successful small businesses in Virginia by providing a wide range of educational and support tools to the veterans.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Governor and General Assembly provide an appropriation in the amount of \$1,000,000 in FY20 and \$1,000,000 in FY21 for the Microloan for Veterans Program fund.

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Virginia National Guard  
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Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2020

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Kevin Huffman  
Phone Number  
Email

## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx Virginia National Guard Scholarship Program

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth to the Virginia National Guard through a scholarship program covering tuition costs for accredited Virginia colleges and universities, certification programs, community colleges and trade schools.

**BACKGROUND:**

- The Virginia National Guard (VNG) may miss end-strength goals for the first time in over a decade. National Guard leadership in Washington, D.C. made it clear that states who fail to meet strength goals will lose force structure.
- Loss of force structure equals loss of equipment, facilities, and personnel dollars to the Commonwealth, and lost opportunity to pursue increased force structure, which is a current priority for The Adjutant General.
- VNG is losing recruits and current Virginia Guardsmen to surrounding states offering free college tuition for members and assistance to family members, including: Tennessee and Pennsylvania.
- Current VNG tuition assistance benefit comes with a 2-year service obligation and the benefit fluctuates year-to-year depending on several factors.

**DISCUSSION:**

- VNG is the tip of the spear with cutting edge weapons systems and force structure, and cannot grow without meeting end-strength goals.
- Increased tuition incentives serve as strong recruiting and retention tools to help reach end strength goals
- Increased tuition incentives provides stability to Guardsmen and their families, and strengthen the VNG and their communities by furthering their education.
- Investing in a scholarship program brings additional funds to Virginia institutions of higher education, increased salaries (higher tax brackets), and most importantly—skilled workers participating in Virginia's economy.
- Guardsmen are less transient than active duty, and more likely to settle permanently in Virginia and use the tuition assistance at Virginia's institutions of higher learning – in person or online, as well as shop, buy homes and enjoy leisure activities within the Commonwealth.
- A wider variety of education incentives to the only Soldiers and Airmen in the nation who serve the Commonwealth directly, will propel Virginia toward our goal of becoming the most Veteran friendly state in the nation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support for a Virginia National Guard Scholarship program to fully cover Guardsmen seeking a degree or certification.

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Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2020

JLC Contact  
VNGA  
Kevin Hoffman  
Phone Number  
Email

## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard through raising the minimum Emergency Response Pay (ERP) to the equivalent of a service member with the rank of E-6 (Staff Sergeant) with 18 years of service, which is currently just over \$125 per day.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

- During state emergencies when the Governor calls up the National Guard, Guardsmen are brought on as temporary state employees at a very low payband.
- Guardsmen often lose pay while on state active duty. Guardsmen often are forced to use vacation time or take leave without pay. Most employers do not supplement the pay difference.
- Other state employees involved in emergency response work overtime and go home or to a hotel, however, Guardsmen on SAD are not eligible for overtime pay, put in 12-18 hours per day, and are typically quartered in austere conditions such as an armory or tent.
- Since January 2014, the VNG has mobilized nearly 2,570 personnel on state active duty to respond to hurricanes, winter storms and flooding. Guardsmen are often given only 12 hours to report for SAD.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- During the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" Protests in August 2017, Guardsmen stood side-by-side to Virginia State Police in extremely stressful and challenging conditions, and were woefully undercompensated compared to the state police.
- SAD pay amounts are determined by DOD pay tables. An E-1 VNG Soldier/Airman earns about \$89.75 per day, before taxes, which on a 12-hour shift equals \$7.48 per hour – less than the federal minimum wage.
- It is essential that Guardsmen are compensated at a reasonable rate, at least comparable to minimum wage, with a set pay floor.
- It is essential to promote a positive work environment when conducting SAD missions to send the message to Guardsmen that their efforts are valued equally to other emergency response agencies.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen are paid at least at the E6 rate when they are called to SAD in emergency situations.

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Women Marines Association*

DATE, 2019

JLC Contact

DAV

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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Resolution of Personal Property Tax Relief for Certain Disabled Veterans

**OBJECTIVE:** To create a unified, cohesive system for personal property tax relief to certain disabled veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Virginia's counties and independent cities currently have a patchwork system of personal property tax relief for veterans. Most offer no exemption, but among those that do offer something, how much relief – partial or full – and which veterans qualify varies widely.
- This creates confusion and distress among veterans who move from a locality with personal property tax relief to a new locality that does not.
- The Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Department of Virginia has passed resolutions at the past two state conferences (Res 10, Res 19) calling for personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for veterans who qualify for the real property tax exemption.
- Vehicles such as SUVs and vans that are retrofitted to accommodate disabilities can have high value and therefore high personal property tax rates.

**DISCUSSION:**

- As a Commonwealth, there is supposed to be uniform policies and tax exemptions.
- The Commissioners of the Revenue and other assessing officials are supportive of personal property tax exemption on one vehicle with the same requirements as the real property tax exemption.
- This would allow veterans who are 100% service-connected, total and permanently disabled, as rated by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and therefore qualified for the real property tax exemption to also qualify for exemption on one vehicle.
- This is another way to support low-income veterans, many of whom often risk losing their vehicle due to late payments and fines.
- Localities would still be able to keep existing partial or full exemptions for other veterans in place, if desired.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly approve the 2<sup>nd</sup> resolution and corresponding legislation creating a standardized, statewide personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for 100% service-connected, total and permanent disabled veterans and send it to the voters on November 3, 2020.

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DATE, 2020

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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020

#### Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income

**OBJECTIVE:** To reform the Virginia state tax law, creating a phased in system to exempt a portion of military retirement income beginning in 2020.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Currently Virginia does not exempt military retirement income, while three of Virginia's neighbors (NC, WV, MD) have some level of state tax exemption on military retirement income.
- The personal income tax laws of over half the states provides various exclusions from gross income in determining tax liability, including an exclusion for combat-related special compensation and death benefit payments received by a surviving spouse or other beneficiary designated by a military veteran.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Non-military income, including all income derived from federal or military contracts, consulting or full-time employment will be taxed at the full gross income percentages.
- The qualifying retirement income must be received as a result of an honorable discharge and retirement from full-time, active-duty service in the armed forces of the United States, or reserve components thereof, including the National Guard.
- For each taxable year beginning on or after January 1, 2020 gross income shall not include a percentage of qualified military retirement income for retirees who are 65 years of age or older and qualified taxpayers.
- The phased in system would:
  - Beginning in 2020: A military retiree may subtract \$10,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.
  - Beginning in 2021: A military retiree may subtract \$20,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.
  - Beginning in 2022: A military retiree may subtract \$30,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.
  - Beginning in 2023: A military retiree may subtract \$40,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly support changes to the current Virginia tax laws for a phased in system to reduce state tax on military

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DATE, 2020

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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 2020-xx

#### Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans

**OBJECTIVE:** To allow individual income tax subtraction for the amount of annual retirement compensation received for service as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, or the Virginia National Guard, for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

- Virginia currently allows qualifying taxpayers to claim a subtraction for up to \$20,000 of disability income. Disabled veterans who already claim this subtraction would not qualify for the new program or would have to drop this subtraction and claim the new one.
- D.C. and Maryland offer exemptions ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000.
  - North Carolina offers a full exemption for retirees with five years of service as of August 12, 1989; otherwise, retirees may claim a deduction of up to \$4,000.
  - Kentucky offers exemptions of \$41,110 and West Virginia \$20,000.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- While Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) is not subject to federal or Virginia taxation, Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) are generally subject to both federal and Virginia taxation.
- Available reports do not provide specific data on the exact number of 100% service-connected disabled veterans in Virginia, however, the VA has given a reasonable estimate of 1,371 disabled Virginia veterans who would qualify for this benefit.
- Department of Taxation considers implementation of this bill as routine, and does not require additional funding.
- No subtraction would be permitted if another Virginia subtraction or deduction for such service has been claimed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.

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## **ATTACHMENT 7**

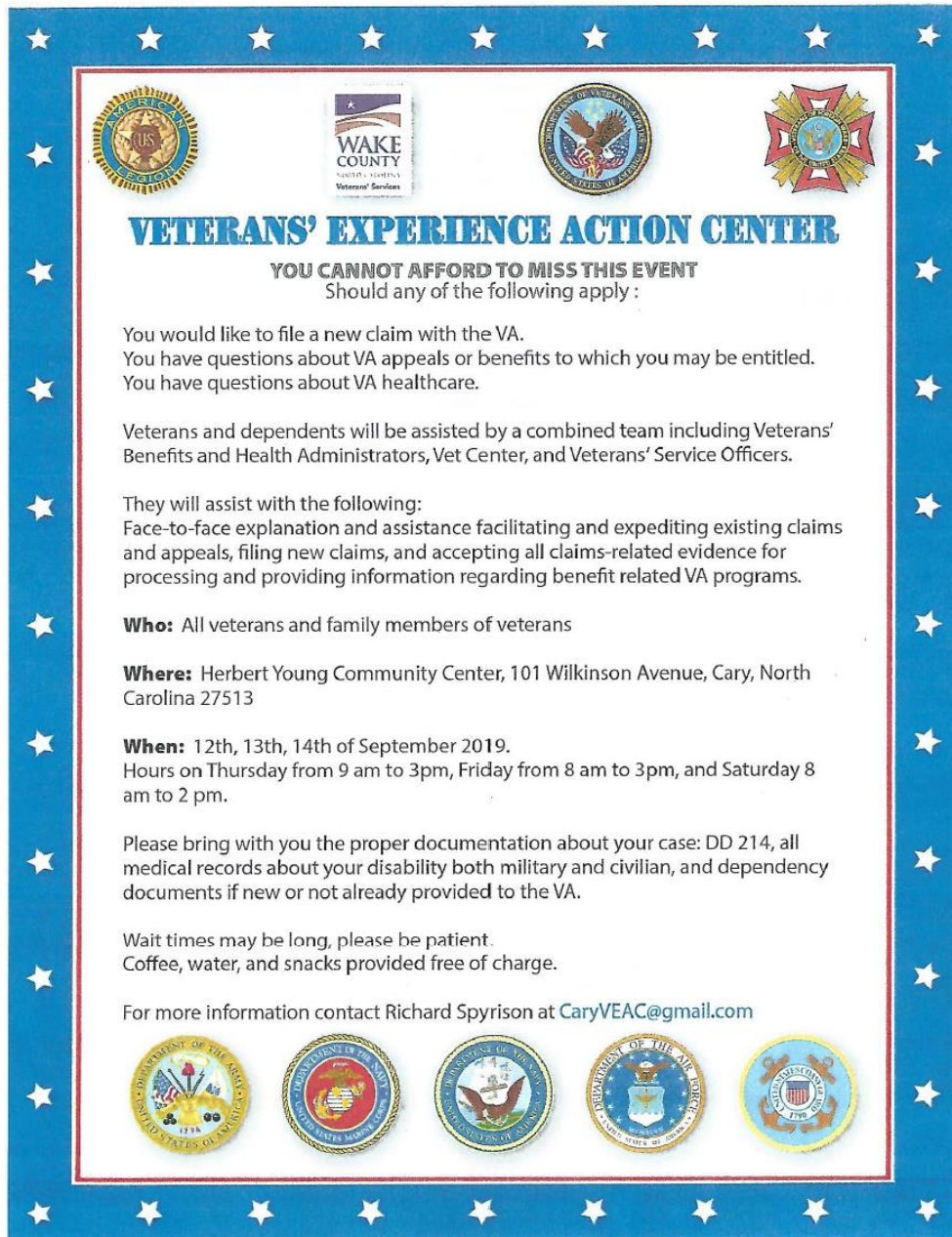
### **CALL FOR JLC APPOINTED OFFICERS TO FILL OPENINGS**

- Legislative Officer: Dave Sitler
  - Assistant Legislative Officers: OPEN; OPEN
- Chaplain: Denice Williams
- Constitution & By-Laws Committee
  - Chairman: Tom Wozniak
  - Members: Ace Taylor, Fallon Martin (A)
- Nominating Committee
  - Chairman: Dan Boyer,
  - Members: Judy Reid, Bob Sempek (A)
- JLC Rep to the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC)
  - Primary: Chair
  - Alternate: Craig Cressman
- JLC Rep to the State Board of Elections (SBE)
  - Primary: MOAA
- JLC Rep to Board of Veteran Services (BVS)
  - Primary: Chair
  - Alternate: Rick Oertel
- JLC Rep to Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)
  - Primary: Chair
  - Alternate: Vice Chair
- JLC Reps to Veterans Treatment Dockets
  - NOVA: OPEN
  - Hampton Roads: John Cooper, Rich Mansfield (A)
  - Spotsylvania/Central VA: Bill Ashton
- Select Committee to Assist the DVS Women Veterans Program Manager:
  - Marie Juliano (JLC), Lyla Kohistany (BVS)
- Select Committee to Assist the DVS Veteran Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Coordinator: Lauren Augustine (JLC), Nick Kesler (BVS)



## ATTACHMENT 8

Handout from Bill Ashton during new business



A handout for the Veterans' Experience Action Center (VEAC) event. The handout is framed by a blue border with white stars. At the top, there are four logos: the American Legion, Wake County Veterans' Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Maltese Cross. The title "VETERANS' EXPERIENCE ACTION CENTER" is in large, bold, blue letters. Below the title, it says "YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS THIS EVENT" and "Should any of the following apply :". The text lists three reasons why veterans should attend: filing a new claim, questions about VA appeals or benefits, and questions about VA healthcare. It then states that veterans and dependents will be assisted by a combined team including Veterans' Benefits and Health Administrators, Vet Center, and Veterans' Service Officers. The text lists the services they will assist with: face-to-face explanation and assistance, expediting existing claims and appeals, filing new claims, and accepting all claims-related evidence. The "Who" section states that all veterans and family members of veterans are welcome. The "Where" section states that the event is at the Herbert Young Community Center, 101 Wilkinson Avenue, Cary, North Carolina 27513. The "When" section states that the event is on September 12th, 13th, and 14th, 2019, with hours from 9 am to 3 pm on Thursday, 8 am to 3 pm on Friday, and 8 am to 2 pm on Saturday. It asks veterans to bring proper documentation about their case, including DD 214, medical records, and dependency documents. It also mentions that wait times may be long, but coffee, water, and snacks are provided free of charge. For more information, it provides the contact information for Richard Spyrisson at CaryVEAC@gmail.com. At the bottom, there are five circular logos representing the Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, Department of the Air Force, Department of the Coast Guard, and the Department of the Marine Corps.

**VETERANS' EXPERIENCE ACTION CENTER**

**YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS THIS EVENT**  
Should any of the following apply :

You would like to file a new claim with the VA.  
You have questions about VA appeals or benefits to which you may be entitled.  
You have questions about VA healthcare.

Veterans and dependents will be assisted by a combined team including Veterans' Benefits and Health Administrators, Vet Center, and Veterans' Service Officers.

They will assist with the following:  
Face-to-face explanation and assistance facilitating and expediting existing claims and appeals, filing new claims, and accepting all claims-related evidence for processing and providing information regarding benefit related VA programs.

**Who:** All veterans and family members of veterans

**Where:** Herbert Young Community Center, 101 Wilkinson Avenue, Cary, North Carolina 27513

**When:** 12th, 13th, 14th of September 2019.  
Hours on Thursday from 9 am to 3pm, Friday from 8 am to 3pm, and Saturday 8 am to 2 pm.

Please bring with you the proper documentation about your case: DD 214, all medical records about your disability both military and civilian, and dependency documents if new or not already provided to the VA.

Wait times may be long, please be patient.  
Coffee, water, and snacks provided free of charge.

For more information contact Richard Spyrisson at [CaryVEAC@gmail.com](mailto:CaryVEAC@gmail.com)